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When the Birds Go North Again

Ella Higginson

KC 3142

WHEN THE BIRDS GO NORTH AGAIN

The MMC Co.

WHEN THE BIRDS GO NORTH AGAIN

BY

ELLA HIGGINSON

Author of "A Forest Orchid and Other Stories," and "From the Land of the Snow-Pearls"

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To My Sister

CARRIE BLAKE MORGAN

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WHEN THE BIRDS GO NORTH AGAIN

Oh, every year hath its winter,
And every year hath its rain —
But a day is always coming
When the birds go North again.

When new leaves swell in the forest,
And grass springs green on the plain,
And the alder's veins turn crimson —
And the birds go North again.

Oh, every heart hath its sorrow,
And every heart hath its pain —
But a day is always coming
When the birds go North again.

'Tis the sweetest thing to remember
If courage be on the wane,
When the cold dark days are over —
Why, the birds go North again.

GOD'S CREED

FORGIVE me that I hear thy creeds
Unawed and unafraid;
They are too small for one whose ears
Have heard God's organ played;
Who in wide, noble solitudes,
In simple faith has prayed.

Forgive me that I cannot kneel
And worship in this pew,
For I have knelt in western dawns,
When the stars were large and few,
And the only fonts God gave me were
The deep leaves filled with dew.

And so it is I worship best
With only the soft air
About me, and the sun's warm gold
Upon my brow and hair;
For then my very heart and soul
Mount upward in swift prayer.

My church has been a yellow space
Ceiled over with blue heaven,
My pew upon a noble hill
Where the fir-trees were seven,
And the stars upon their slender tops
Were tapers lit at even.

My knees have known no cushions rich,
But the soft, emerald sod;
My aisles have been the forest paths
Lined with the crimson-rod;
My choir, the birds and winds and waves —
My only pastor, God.

My steeple has been the dome of snow
From the blue land that swells;
My rosary the acorns small
That drop from bronzéd cells;
And the only bells that summoned me
Were the rhododendron bells.

At Easter, God's own hand adorned
These dim, sweet, sacred bowers
With the twin-blossom's delicate vine
And all the West's rich flowers;
And lest they droop in mellow nights,
He cooled them with light showers.

The crimson salmon-berry bells
And wild violets were here,
And those white, silent stars that shine
Thro' purple glooms so clear;
And the pure lilies that are meet
For a young virgin's bier.

Wild-currant blossoms broke and bled,
Even as Mary's heart;
The gold musk in the marshy spots
Curled tempting lips apart;
And I saw the feathery lupine, too,
Up from the warm earth start.

The clover blossoms, pink and white,
Rimmed round the silver mere;
The thrifty dandelion lit
Her dawn-lamps far and near;
There was one white bloom that thro' the dusk
Shone liquid, like a tear.

I watched the dawn come up the East,
Lilied and chaste and still;
I felt my heart beat wild and strong,
My veins with white fire thrill;
For it was the Easter dawn — and Christ
Was with me on the hill!

Oh, every little feathered throat
  Swelled full with lyric song,
And the ocean played along the shore,
  Full, passionate and strong —
An organ grand whose each wave-note
  Was sounded sweet and long.

And so it is I worship best
  With only the soft air
About me, and the sun's warm gold
  Upon my brow and hair;
For then my very heart and soul
  Mount upward in swift prayer.

Forgive me that I hear thy creeds
  Unawed and unafraid;
They are too small for one whose ears
  Have heard God's organ played;
Who in vast, noble solitudes
  In simple faith has prayed.

FOUR-LEAF CLOVER

KNOW a place where the sun is like gold,
And the cherry blooms burst with snow,
And down underneath is the loveliest nook,
Where the four-leaf clovers grow.

One leaf is for hope, and one is for faith,
And one is for love, you know,
And God put another in for luck —
If you search, you will find where they grow.

But you must have hope, and you must have faith,
You must love and be strong — and so —
If you work, if you wait, you will find the place
Where the four-leaf clovers grow.

BEGGARS

CHILD with the hungry eyes,
The pallid mouth and brow,
And the lifted, asking hands,
I am more starved than thou.

I beg not on the street;
But where the sinner stands,
In secret place, I beg
Of God, with outstretched hands.

As thou hast asked of me,
Raising thy downcast head,
So have I asked of Him,
So, trembling, have I plead.

Take this and go thy way;
Thy hunger shall soon cease.
Thou prayest but for bread,
And I, alas! for peace.

THE MEADOW-LARK

HEN the first September rain
Has gone sparkling down my pane,
And the blue has come again,
And with pearls each leaf is shaking,
Then a soft voice rises near,
Oh, so mournfully and clear
That the tears spring as I hear —
"*Sweet — oh — Sweet — my heart is breaking!*"

Gone the white mock-orange sprays,
Gone the clover-scented ways,
Gone the dear, delicious days,
And the earth sad tones is taking;
But who could the spring forget
While that soft voice rises, set
Deep in passion and regret —
"*Sweet — oh — Sweet — my heart is breaking!*"

Was it only yester year
That I stood and listened here,
Without heartache, without tear,
For a burst of joy mistaking
Those full lyric notes of pain
Mounting yet and yet again
From the meadows wet with rain —
"Sweet — oh — Sweet — my heart is breaking!"

I know better, lark, to-day,
I have walked with sorrow — yea,
I know all that thou would'st say,
And my heart with tears is aching,
When across the fading year
Thou goest calling far and near,
Oh, so mournfully and clear —
"Sweet — oh — Sweet — my heart is breaking!"

A PRAYER

LORD God, Thou lettest the green things start
A new life every year;
Out of their sunken selves they rise,
Erect and sweet and clear.
Behold the lily's pure, white leaves
Unfolding by each mere!

Again the sap mounts in the fir
Thro' every swelling vein;
Again the clover stirs and thrills,
Responsive to the rain;
Again the tender grass makes green
The lone breast of the plain.

Hear the new, golden flood of song
  The lark pours to the blue!
Behold the strong, undaunted shoot
  Pushing its brave front through
The fallen tree. . . . Lord God, Lord God,
  Let me begin anew!

Out of my own self let me rise!
  For, God, if it can be
A new and noble growth may spring
  From yon decaying tree —
Surely a strong, pure life may mount
  Out of this life of me.

WE TWO IN ARCADIE

E two have been to Arcadie —
But it was long ago;
The wild syringa blossomed there,
Gold hearts set sweet in snow,
And crimson salmon-berry bells —
Ah, me, so long ago!

We two went into Arcadie
Without one backward glance;
Deep thro' the brown breast of the earth
The sun had sent his lance,
And every flower straightway sprung
Up from her long, sweet trance.

We two alone in Arcadie!
The road thro' forests ran,
A silver ribbon; and we heard
The mellow pipes o' Pan,
And followed as he fled thro' lights
Of green and gold and tan.

We two went on thro' Arcadie
In joy too deep for words;
The little clouds were tangled in
The trees like beaten curds.
We heard the stammering speech of rills
And the passion-calls of birds.

Ah, me, from pleasant Arcadie
We two came out — alas!
No more to lie beneath the trees
In the pale-green velvet grass —
To listen to the pipes o' Pan
And hear his footsteps pass!

Still, still, I know in Arcadie
The blossoms fall like snow
On happy lovers — as they fell
On us so long ago!
But, oh, my love, thro' Arcadie
No more shall we two go!

DREAM–TIME

IT is the time when crimson stars
Weary of heaven's cold delight,
And take, like petals from a rose,
Their soft and hesitating flight
Upon the cool wings of the air
Across the purple night.

It is the time when silver sails
Go drifting down the violet sea,
And every poppy's crimson mouth
Kisses to sleep a lovesick bee;
The fireweed waves her rosy plumes
On pasture, hill and lea.

It is the time to dream — and feel
The lanquid rocking of a boat,
The pushing ripple round the keel
Where cool, deep-hearted lilies float,
And hear thro' wild syringas steal
Some songster's drowsy note.

It is the time, at eve, to lie
  And in a hammock faintly sway,
To watch the golds and crimsons die
  Across the blue stretch of the bay;
To hear the sweet dusk tiptoe by
  In the footsteps of the day.

SERENADE

HE SINGS

WAKE, my Lady Sweetlips,
The moon draws to the sea,
The dew draws to the clover bloom —
And I to thee.
The sea will waken to the moon,
The clover to the bee —
Awake, my Lady Sweetlips,
Awake to me.

Awake, my Lady Sweetlips,
The nightingale has ceased,
The pale, pale petals of the dawn
Drift up the East;
My heart aches with the ravishment
Of love's sweet ecstasy —
Awake, my Lady Sweetlips,
Awake to me.

Arise, my Lady Sweetlips,
The soft hours tremble by,
Too soon the red rose of the dawn
Burns in the sky;
The lark arises to the dawn,
Singing, from off the lea —
Arise, my Lady Sweetlips,
Arise to me.

THE NOVICES OF HEAVEN

EHOLD how God has sown the stars,
In the blue fields of the sky;
When purple dusk comes stilly on,
How soft and thick they lie
Within the lower deeps — the earth
To crown and beautify!

On nights like this the angels steal
Out of the jewelled gate,
Upon the porches wrought of pearl,
And look and lean and wait,
With tender eyes turned down to earth,
Till the hour grows sweet and late.

With soft arms lightly pressed upon
The outer balustrade,
Whose every rail and baluster
Of fire-opal is made,
Their misty shadows wavering
On the amethyst arcade,

They lean and look in silence there,
Above the spirit sea
Up which the souls must rise from earth,
When God shall set them free;
They watch the silver hours go by,
And wait so patiently!

These are the novices of heaven,
Whose eyes still earthward turn;
Whose souls, unused to higher life,
Still ever earthward yearn;
Whose hearts, unable to forget,
Still for the earth-hearts burn.

And so on nights like this they steal
While the older angels sleep,
Out to the opal balustrade,
And longing vigils keep;
And when the lights go out on earth
They bow their heads and weep.

EASTER DAWN

ENTER, sun, this silent world!
Let thy colors shake unfurled,
Down these pale green miles of sky,
On this pale green sea to lie.
Not a murmur breaks the still
Of the forest on yon hill;
Scarce a ripple round my prow
As the sea I softly plow.
Here the jellyfish has spread
His umbrella o'er his head.
And the olive kelp things pass
Noiselessly, on liquid glass.
In the distance, sweet and dim,
All the enchanted islands swim,
And the large, white morning-star
Watches o'er the western bar.

Lean aside, ye domes of snow,
Let the proud sun enter slow,
As befits a royal king!
Now, behold, how everything
Of a sudden springs to life —
With keen passion swiftly rife!
How the ripples laugh and speak,
Sliding lengthwise, cheek to cheek;
How the radiant colors run
Up before the mounting sun;
How is tipped with crimson fire
Every slender forest spire;
How the gray rocks, creased and worn,
By the tides of centuries torn,
Lift their barren breasts and turn
Dumbly to the light, and burn;
How the islands flame like brass
On a floor of tinted glass,
And the frozen mountains speak
With blazing signals, peak to peak.
Now the small waves shine and sing
As round my prow they lip and cling;

By a faint scent wandereth
Sweeter than a woman's breath,
And a flush burns in the South
Warmer than a woman's mouth.
Every bird on yonder hill
With his full notes breaks the still —
God's inspired chorus! Hark!
Robin, thrush, song-sparrow, lark.

Lo, it is the Easter dawn!
Lo, it is the holy dawn!

In no church with incense sweet
May I hope my Lord to meet —
Where the finest choirs are sought,
And the richest pews are bought;
Where the longing ones are dumb,
And the ragged must not come;
Where the sinful and the worn,
And the woman passion-torn —
Hollow-eyed and lipped with gray —
See the rich skirts drawn away

By a hand immaculate,
Lest one touch contaminate.
Rather, let me steal apart,
With a full and trembling heart,
Where dumb things unite in praise
Of this holy day of days,
And in places pure as this
Kneel, His tortured feet to kiss.
Not one broken, dying flower
Do I offer in this hour,
But my lifted, shaking hands
Bear offerings He understands;
And I feel His palm in mine,
And I drink His breath like wine.

O, my soul, mount high and sing!
O, my soul, mount high and sing!

THE WAY THOU SINGEST

H, I have heard a meadow-lark
Sing o'er the growing corn
In notes of passion and desire,
At early primrose morn—
So full and rich and sweet,
My heart with rapture beat,
And for remembered years
Up sprang the tears. . . .
And here—and now—
So singest thou!

And I have heard—and seen—the notes
Of a brief summer rain
Burst into sudden, lyric gold
Upon my window-pane—

When the sunset's lucent flame
For one sweet instant came —
  Born of the rain's desire
  And the sunset's fire. . . .
And here — and now —
So singest thou!

I dreamed I heard an angel sing
  With rapt and lifted eyes;
With marvel in his voice and look
  And in his heart surprise
That the angels leaned from sleep
To hear and bow and weep,
  Thinking of ones loved so
  On earth below. . . .
And here — and now —
So singest thou!

THE LONG AGO

UT in the woods where the air is sweet,
And the fragrant, wild things blow,
Dwelt you and I from the world apart
In the beautiful long ago.

Do you remember the pale pink flower
That grew by the wayside there?
Oh, every leaf was a leaf of gold,
And the commonest weed was rare!

There were snow-white tents in the alder grove,
Where the gypsies slept at night —
And oh, but each hour was an hour of love,
Set with moments of delight!

The ceiling that trembled above our heads —
  Was it only the sky's deep blue?
The jewels that hung on the lily's stem —
  Were they only drops of dew?

And the song that went to the gates of God
  Thro' the dawn's first emerald hush —
Was it sung by a seraph lost from heaven,
  Or a golden-noted thrush?

Oh, love, my love, there was never a couch
  So soft as that velvet sod!
And every song was a seraph's song —
  For the soul of our love was God.

And oh, for the woods where the air is sweet,
  And the fragrant, wild things blow —
Where we two loved as the angels love,
  In the beautiful long ago.

I COULD NOT BE A NUN

COULD not be a nun,
For I should kneel and say
A prayer for every bead
A dozen times a day —
And all the while my thoughts
Would wander thy dear way.

I could not be a nun,
And push my warm brown hair
Under a heavy veil,
And smooth and hide it there —
For I should smile, and think,
"He praised it as most fair."

How could I be a nun?
  How could I ever still
The sudden throb, or stay
  The thought of thee at will,
Or check the quick response
  To love's remembered thrill?

I could not be a nun,
  I never could confess
My sins, and not say — "Lord,
  I love him more, not less;
Give me a thousand years
  Of pain for one caress!"

I could not be a nun —
  Dearest, thou knowest this!
For deep my cheek would burn
  At thought of one long kiss;
Or I should bow and weep
  One unforgotten bliss.

I could not be a nun!
For how, I ask, at night
Could I lie still and sleep
Within my chamber white,
Nor reach my arms and yearn
For one dear lost delight?

Nay. In the first sweet dream
I should run straight to thee,
And draw thee — my arms so —
Close, closer, love, to me. . . .
And till the morning bell
We would kiss silently.

EVE

LOSE to the gates of Paradise I flee;
The night is hot and serpents leave their beds,
And slide along the dark, crooking their heads,—
My God, my God, open the gates to me!

My eyes are burning so I cannot see;
My feet are bleeding and I suffer pain;
Let me come in on the cool grass again—
My God, my God, open the gates to me!

I ate the fruit of the forbidden tree,
And was cast out into the barren drouth;
And since—the awful taste within my mouth!
My God, my God, open the gates to me!

Am I shut out for all eternity?
I do repent me of my one black sin,
With prayers and tears of blood. . . . Let me come in!
My God, my God, open the gates to me!

Let me come in where birds and flowers be;
Let me once more lie naked in the grass
That trembles when the long wind-ripples pass!
Lord God, Lord God, open the gates to me!

WEARING OUT LOVE

FORGIVE you? . . . Oh, of course, dear,
A dozen times a week!
We women were created
Forgiveness but to speak.

You'd die before you'd hurt me
Intentionally? . . . True.
But it is not, O dearest,
The thing you mean to do—

It's what you do, unthinking,
That makes the quick tear start;
The tear may be forgotten—
But the hurt stays in the heart.

And tho' I may forgive you
A dozen times a day,
Yet each forgiveness wears, dear,
A little love away.

As the impatient river
Wears out the patient sand,
Or as the fickle ocean
Wears out the faithful land.

And one day you'll be grieving,
And chiding me, no doubt,
Because so much forgiving
Has worn a great love out.

THE RHODODENDRON BELLS

CROSS the warm night's subtle dusk,
Where linger yet the purple light
And perfume of the wild, sweet musk,—
So softly glowing, softly bright,
Tremble the rhododendron bells,
The rose-pink rhododendron bells.

Tall, slender trees of evergreen
That know the winds of Puget Sea,
And narrow leaves of satin's sheen,
And clusters of sweet mystery—
Mysterious rhododendron bells,
Rare, crimson rhododendron bells.

O hearken — hush! And lean thy ear,
Tuned for an elfin melody,
And tell me now, dost thou not hear
Those voices of pink mystery?—
Voices of silver-throated bells,
Of breathing, rhododendron bells.

IF I SHOULD DIE

IF I should die — then would the old love spring
Up from the fallow wastes within thy heart;
Straight would the flower from the old roots start —
But oh! what deathless thorns would ache and sting.

If I should die — but nay! If I should live
And stumble on my way with bleeding feet —
Dearest, might not the old flow'r, newly sweet,
Rise from the weed-choked past — if I should live?

REAPING

WHY is it I forget the good
You brought me in the past,
And dwell upon the tireless grief
You wrought me at the last?

Why is it I forget how kind
And true you were for years,
And only think how at the last
You gave me shame and tears?

Why is it I forget the fault
Was mine — my very own,
And murmur in my sleepless grief
That it was yours alone?

This is my punishment. Love's rose
Has fallen by the way;
But on its thorn, that still remains,
My heart bleeds night and day.

THE TIDE IS LOW

HE tide is low, is low,
And the shining waves run out,
And along the pebbled beach
The children play and shout.

To-night these waves will come
Speaking along the shore, —
But the voice that is in my heart
I shall hear no more, no more.

To-night these waves will come,
Beating with life from the main, —
But the heart of my very heart
Will never beat again.

MOONRISE IN THE ROCKIES

THE trembling train clings to the leaning wall
Of solid stone; a thousand feet below
Sinks a black gulf; the sky hangs like a pall
Upon the peaks of everlasting snow.

Then of a sudden springs a rim of light,
Curved like a silver sickle. High and higher—
Till the full moon burns on the breast of night
And a million firs stand tipped with lucent fire.

HATE

IF hate be unforgivable,
Then must I unforgiven be,
For I shall hate one woman, Lord,
For all eternity.

Forgiven or not, I hate her so
That did she, burnt with fever, lie,
I'd spill the ice-cup that she craved
And laugh to see her die.

Yea, Lord, yea, Lord — I hate her so
That, were she sent to deepest hell,
I'd pray the awful fires might do
Their part slow — slow — and well.

APRIL

AH, who is this with twinkling feet,
With glad, young eyes and laughter sweet,
Who tosses back her strong, wild hair,
And saucy kisses flings to Care,
The while she laughs at her? Beware—
You who this winsome maiden meet!

She dances on a daisied throne,
About her waist a slender zone
Of dandelion's gold; her eyes
Are softer than the summer skies,
And blue as violets; and lies
A tearful laughter in her tone.

She reaches dimpled arms and bare;
Her breath is sweet as wild-rose air;
She sighs, she smiles, she glances down,
Her brows meet in a sudden frown;
She laughs; then tears the violets drown—
If you should meet her—ah, beware!

TWO DAYS

CROSSED a daisied field; the skies were fair,
The lusty trees stretched green arms overhead;
The sun shook gold dust thro' the April air,
And a glad brook leaped down its pebbled bed.

The meadow-lark flung out such liquid notes,
My happy soul stood still and leaned to hear;
The wild canaries fluffed their yellow coats,
And turned their restless heads in jealous fear.

And, oh, my heart was glad, for it was spring!
Blue, blue the dappled skies that swung above!
But still more glad my soul, remembering
The world was sweet to me because of love.

* * * * * * *

I crossed a lonely field; the skies were gray,
The winds crept from the sea with sullen moans;
Ice-locked, ice-bound, the brook grieved night and day
Above the hollow sound of falling cones.

With drumming wings the mottled pheasant flew,
The ghostly trees reached barren arms across;
And, oh, my heart was sad — so well I knew
The winter world was dull because of loss.

LOVE–SONG

THE green is on the grass again,
And the blue is on the sea,
And every lark is singing to
His mate in ecstasy;
And oh, my love, and oh, my love,
I sing to thee!

Wild Mary-buds are opening
Within the marshy lea,
And quickened saps are pulsing thro'
The heart of every tree;
And ah, how thy love wakes and thrills
The heart of me!

The green is on the grass again,
And the blue is on the sea,
And every bird is longing for
The nesting-time; the bee
Is longing for the clover-bloom,
And I for thee!

I THANK THEE, GOD

FOR my small corner of the world —
Blue sea, blue sky and pale green sod,
And noble mountains glistening mistily —
I thank Thee, God!

For deeps where white syringa droops,
And dogwood-blossoms shyly nod,
And the wild currant swings her crimson lamps —
I thank Thee, God!

For the sweet clover at my door,
Set all day long with golden bees;
The dewdrops linked along a blade of grass,
The bending trees;

The slender vine about my porch,
The meadow-lark at dawn that sings —
I thank Thee, God, that I have purest joy
In simple things!

THE DEAD

AIN and wind on the roof,
And the ocean beating the shore,
And now and again a shaking of window-panes
And a rattling of the door.

Shadows upon the wall,
Wavering shadows and gray;
Lonely, heartsick, I reach my hand in the dark
For the hand that has gone away.

The dead — do they turn in their graves
On a wind-bared night like this,
And stretch their arms and yearn for the light of the hearth,
And the passionate warmth of a kiss?

JUNE NIGHT

THE sunset burns along the hill,
And all the stars come out too soon,
And lovely, restless Venus lies
In the curled arm of the moon.

Venus, thou art a light-o'-love!
Now by the ardent moon caressed,
Midnight shall find thee trembling down
To the sea's strong, throbbing breast.

WHEN I AM DEAD

HEN I am dead
Bring roses red,
And poppies — blooms of rest —
And heap them on my breast,
That I may breathe their perfume deep —
And sleep and sleep and sleep!
No flowers white,
For chill delight,
Give me on that glad day,
But bend and smile and say:
"Bring blooms that burn and light and glow —
She loved all warmth and color so!"
And all about me to my feet
Drop clovers pink and sweet.
Why should you lay those cold, white things
On the heart where lies with folded wings
The cold, dead bird of song?
Dearest, the last night is so long —
I pray you pile the poppies deep
Upon my breast — that I may sleep!

When I am dead
Let the sun's red
Strike thro' uncurtained pane
From off the singing main;
    Yea, everything must sing that day
    When I go on my glad new way,
And if there should be any tears —
Let them be for my wasted years,
And not for me. Throw all the windows wide
And let the strong surge of the tide
    Come sounding once more up the hill —
    And I shall hear it still!
And each home-coming wave shall say:
"Be glad, be very glad, to-day" —
And for the last time I shall hear!
But after that I would not hear,
For sweet as thought of hearing seems,
Who hears must dream — and I would have no
    dreams!
So pile the crimson poppies deep —
For a long dreamless sleep.

THE POPPY LAND

POPPY sea, and a poppy sky,
And a blur of blue between,
And all around the swelling hills
Of new and delicate green.

Then oh, how sweet, when the dusk comes on,
And the beach fires brightly burn,
And the flaming trees up the Lummi way
To tall red torches turn;

When in the wood the glow-worms shine,
Like little stars of light,
And one by one, all silently,
The hours swim down the night—

Then oh! how sweet is the wind that blows,
Softly and languorously,
From the poppy seas and the poppy skies
In the land of Used-To-Be.

CRADLE-SONG OF THE FISHERMAN'S WIFE

SWUNG in the hollows of the deep,
While silver stars their watches keep,
Sleep, my seabird, sleep!
Our boat the glistening fishes fill,
Our prow turns homeward — hush, be still,
Sleep, my seabird, sleep —
Sleep, sleep.

The wind is springing from out the West,
Nestle thee deeper in mother's breast,
Rest, my seabird, rest!
There is no sea our boat could whelm
While thy brave father is at the helm,
Rest, my seabird, rest —
Rest, rest.

The foam flies past us like beaten cream,
The waves break over, the fierce winds scream,
  Dream, my seabird, dream!
Dream of the cot where high and low,
Crimson and white, the roses blow,
  Dream, my seabird, dream —
    Dream, dream.

What tho' the tempest is on the deep?
Heaven will guard thee — do not weep,
  Sleep, my seabird, sleep!
Be brave as a fisherman's child should be,
Rocked in the hollows of the sea,
  Sleep, my seabird, sleep —
    Sleep, sleep.

THE LADY OF HIGH DEGREE

MY neighbor dwells in a lowly cot,
No curtains at her windows sway,
But one slim morning-glory vine
Swings purple bells the livelong day;
And from the primrose dawn till dusk,
I hear her tender notes outring,
Oh! bitterly I envy her,—
I have too many tears to sing.

I dwell within a marble hall,
And costly gems flash on my breast,
But thro' all sumptuous ease I feel
That simple cottage love is best;
I envy her those tireless feet,
Those happy eyes so free from guile,
I envy her those mirthful lips—
I have too many tears to smile.

All thro' the golden afternoons
She rocks her cradle to and fro
Outside, where lazy breezes creep,
And humble flowers sweetly blow;
And ever as she sings and sews,
The sunbeams in her bosom lurk,
And thoughts of one make labor light —
I have too many tears to work.

And in the lonely, sleepless nights,
I almost see the starlit gloom,
And feel the peace and calm content
Of her low-ceiled and humble room;
Her head lies on an honest breast,
Whose love for her is true and deep,
Ah! happy, happy, happy she!—
I have too many tears to sleep.

ADRIFT AND ANCHORED

UR barques met, touching — and trembled and parted,
Yours for the ocean and mine for the bay;
Ay, yours to drift from the hour that it started,
Mine to be anchored by night and by day.

The storms arise, and the rain-clouds are flying
Over my barque in the harbor at rest;
But my poor heart, when the sea-gulls are crying,
Flees to you tossed on the tempest's mad breast.

And oft — ah, me! — when the lightning is flashing,
Cleaving a pathway of flame o'er the sea,
When winds are wild, and the thunder is crashing
Out where your barque rolls, while calm is with me,

I think I see, through the tears that are burning,
You, as we drift ever farther apart. . . .
You reach your arms — with your lonely heart turning
Back to the deep-anchored peace of my heart.

THE PASSING OF THE HOURS

THE hours steal by with still, unasking lips—
So lightly that I cannot hear their tread;
And softly touch me with their finger-tips
To find if I be dreaming, or be dead.

And yet however still their flight may be,
Their ceaseless going weights my heart with tears;
These touches will have wrought deep scars on me—
When the light hours have worn to heavy years.

THE ROOM BY THE SEA

ROOM so full of sunlight,
Of sound and scent of sea!
No other room in all the world
Could be so dear to me.

O room that looks to Southland —
That looks to East and West!
Thy four calm walls have held for me
Life's truest, purest, best.

O room so full of flowers,
Of sound of wind and sea!
The fairest rooms in palaces
Are poor compared to thee.

And, room, when I have left thee,
  And other eyes peer in,
Be true to me, nor ever speak
  Of dreams that dwelt herein.

For, room, I love thee fondly,
  And hold thee in my heart;
But I have learned with all we love
  There comes a time to part.

A THANK-OFFERING

LORD God, the winter has been sweet and brief
In this fair land;
For us the budded willow and the leaf,
The peaceful strand.

For us the silver nights and golden days,
The violet mist;
The pearly clouds pierced with vibrating rays
Of amethyst.

At evening, every wave of our blue sea
Hollowed to hold
A fragment of the sunset's mystery —
A fleck of gold.

The crimson haze is on the alder trees
In places lush;
Already sings with sweet and lyric ease
The western thrush.

Lord God, for some of us the days and years
Have bitter been;
For some of us the burden and the tears,
The gnawing sin.

For some of us, O God, the scanty store,
The failing bin;
For some of us the gray wolf at the door,
The red, within!

But to the hungry Thou hast given meat,
Hast clothed the cold;
And Thou hast given courage strong and sweet
To the sad and old.

And so we thank Thee, Thou most tender God,
For the leaf and flower;
For the tempered winds, and quickening, velvet sod,
And the gracious shower.

Yea, generous God, we thank Thee for this land
Where all are fed,
Where at the doors no freezing beggars stand,
Pleading for bread.

HUMILITY

FATHER — I have been humble here,
So when I come to Thee,
It will be meet that Thou should'st give
Thy lowliest place to me.

Give me no rare and priceless garb,
No crown with glittering gem,
But let me sit and patiently
Broider thy garment's hem.

I shall not envy her that sings
At morn and eve until
Her passion and her rapture make
The very angels thrill.

I shall not envy her that sits
Proudly at thy right side;
Give me the lowest, humblest place —
I shall be satisfied.

I shall not envy even her
  Upon whose crownéd hair
Thou layest Thy tender, gracious hand,
  And praisest, as most fair,

If once — once only — Thou wilt stoop
  To me, as to a child,
That ever after I may say:
  "He looked at me and smiled."

DESPAIR

STRIDE, like a man, on a dun-colored mare,
Thro' the wan shadows that herald the night,
Down the long valley comes riding Despair.

Sharply the hoof-beats wake up the dull air!
Who would have guessed that I'd know her at sight —
Astride, like a man, on a dun-colored mare!

Bent are her eyebrows beneath her black hair,
Firm is her seat and her rein-touch is light —
Down the long valley comes riding Despair.

Ah, she resembles her pale sister, Care —
She who comes riding, defiant, to-night,
Astride, like a man, on a dun-colored mare!

With eyeballs gleaming and eyelids aflare,
Nostrils distended and thin lips set tight,
Down the long valley comes riding Despair.

(I have a good sword named Courage. I swear,
Back to the wall I will stand up and fight!)
Astride, like a man, on a dun-colored mare,
Down the long valley comes riding Despair.

THE PETALED THORN

SIN is a crimson rose
Petaled upon a thorn,
Whose beauty fairest glows
In its first morn.

But soon (dost know how soon?)
Its petals fall apart;
And comes the high, hot noon
To scorch its heart.

The bloom dies in a day;
Yet petals, fair at morn,
Leave as they fall away,
One deathless thorn.

THE SNOW MOUNTAIN

THOU Sphinx that sittest at the Opal Gate
That lets the ocean in to Puget Sea,
Keeping thy silent watch o'er time and fate,
Thro' clouds that veil thy grandeur mistily,
Or with the sun's fierce halo on thy brow;
Furrowed by lava, rugged, stern and white,
Thou wert a marvel to me once, but now,
Majestic Sphinx! I read thy secret right.

* * * * * * *

God, let me be a mountain when I die,
Stung by the hail, lashed by tormenting rains!
Let lava fires surge, turbulent and high,
With fiercest torture thro' my bursting veins;
Let lightnings flame around my lonely brow,
And mighty storm-clouds race, and break, and roar
About me; let the melted lava plough
Raw furrows in my breast; torment me sore,

O God! Let me hate loneliness, yet see
My very forest felled beneath my eyes.
Give me all Time's distilléd agony,—
Yet let me still stand, mute, beneath the skies;
Thro' storms that beat and inward fires that burn,
Tortured, yet silent; suffering, yet pure,—
That torn and tempted hearts may lift and learn
The noble meaning of the word *endure*.

MOODS

WHEN the great sea roars, like a million lions
With leaping bodies and lashing manes,
And flings itself in a terrible passion
Across the tide's black, reeking plains,
My soul springs up in its clay-walled prison,
In a mad desire to be out and free —
To shake the land with that animal power,
And be one with the tempest that rocks the sea.

When the tide creeps out and the moon looks over
The far, blue, cloud-vexed mountain line,
And the night is sweet, and the red and white clover
Like stars in the murmurous meadow shine;
When the winds crawl back, like beasts that are conquered,
And the sea lies sobbing, her passion spent, —
My soul rests glad, in its wise, stern prison
And sinks to a tender and sweet content.

THE FALLING STAR

OWN thro' the purple, scented dusk
A red star swiftly fell.
Was it a passionate soul that loved
Not wisely but too well,
And scorning heaven's cold delight,
Joined its lost love in hell?

TO AN ENEMY

LITTLE snake, little snake,
Hiding in the grass—
Lo, I crush thee with my heel
As I pass!

Little snake, little snake,
See thy slimy track—
Ah, for shame, to stab and stab
In the back!

Just for once a woman be,
Open fight to make—
I love an honest enemy;
I loathe a snake.

Useless, harmless, treacherous—
Hiss thy little time!
Thy only hope of fame can be
Thro' my rhyme.

THE LINGERING OF THE FLOWERS

know a hollow in the wood
Where spring her luring witchery weaves,
But now the winds have made of it
A lonely sepulchre of leaves;
Here Pan blows on his reeded pipes,
And for the summer grieves.

The desolation of the year
Is coming on apace, I know,
But still the everlasting's pearls
Shine by the roadside, row on row;
And late bur-marigolds, like lamps,
In dark, lush places glow.

Still, still the tall wild asters stand
In lavender groups beside the way,
The sunlight's fading splendor gilds
The white-veiled beryl of the bay;

And the last yellow violet
I found but yesterday.

Cross any little stream, and see
The brooklime's tiny azure eyes!
Surely they stole that perfect hue
Right out of last June's fairest skies,
And kept it hidden until now —
Just for a sweet surprise.

We hear the meadow-lark at morn,
With joy veined thro' and thro' with pain;
He knows the secret — how to lure
Our dear, lost springtimes back again,
And shake their sweetness thro' his notes
Like drops of golden rain.

The dark and lonely winter days —
How soon, how soon they will be here!
But even the darkest one will hold
One small, pale blossom of good cheer;
And oh, the sweet things that will come
With the throb of another year!

CHRISTMAS EVE

STRAIGHT thro' a fold of purple mist
The sun goes down — a crimson wheel —
And like an opal burns the sea
That once was cold as steel.

With pomp of purple, gold and red,
Thou wilt come back at morrow's dawn . . .
But thou can'st never bring, O Sun,
The Christmas that is gone!

SUNRISE ON THE WILLAMETTE

THE sun sinks downward thro' the silver mist
That looms across the valley, fold on fold,
And sliding thro' the fields that dawn has kissed,
Willamette sweeps, each dimple set with gold.

Sweeps onward ever, curving as it goes,
Past many a hill and many a flowered lea,
Until it pauses where Columbia flows,
Deep-tongued, deep-chested, to the waiting sea.

O lovely vales thro' which Willamette slips!
O vine-clad hills that hear its soft voice call!
My heart turns ever to those sweet, cool lips!
That, passing, press each rock or grassy wall.

Thro' pasture lands, where mild-eyed cattle feed,
  Thro' marshy flats, where velvet tulés grow,
Past many a rose-tree, many a singing reed,
  I hear those wet lips calling, calling low.

The sun sinks downward thro' the trembling haze,
  The mist flings glistening needles high and higher,
And thro' the clouds — O fair beyond all praise! —
  Mount Hood leaps, chastened, from a sea of fire.

THE PATHWAY OF SOULS

THE lonely midnight, deep and still,
Pressed hard upon the sea;
Up came the moon above the hill,
Slowly and silently.

No voice, no step, no sound I heard,
No early chanticleer;
Not even a murmur of the frogs
Dreaming within the mere.

No star was lit in the near sky,
No lamp on earth below;
But o'er the purple water led
A path as white as snow.

One softest wind blew from the hill
And shook into my room,
A flower from a locust tree
And a locust flower's perfume.

And then with open eyes I saw
A flight of eerie things,
And then with listening ears I heard
A rush of eerie wings.

And of a sudden then I knew
Why all was still and white:
The dead had visited the earth
Along that path of light.

HAVE MERCY UPON US

WE come in ease and luxury to-day,
In velvet pews to kneel, and, kneeling, say
Our prayers to Thee; and all the while we pray,
Lord God, Lord God, have mercy upon us!

We are the people who believe in Thee;
We are the people who believe that He,
Thine own son, died for all humanity —
Yet, Lord, Lord God, have mercy upon us!

Of all the Pharisees that were or be,
None were or are so shameless quite as we —
That we are not as others to thank Thee!
O Lord, O Lord, have mercy upon us!

We draw the satin skirt away from sin
Embodied in that woman sad and thin,
Whom once Christ bade a new life to begin —
Lord God, Lord God, have mercy upon us!

'Tis not for us to minister to such,
Or marvel on, or pity overmuch;
(Only the rose-leaf sin for us to touch!)
O Lord, Lord God, have mercy upon us!

"We thank Thee, God," we daily say, "that we
Are not as Jews and unbelievers be."
The shame of it — to give such thanks to Thee!
Yet, Lord, Lord God, have mercy upon us!

"We thank Thee, God," we daily say, "for all
The blessings Thou hast giv'n us, great or small,
Which on less favored ones may never fall."
Have mercy, Lord — have mercy upon us!

"We thank Thee, God," we daily say, "that we
Are not as blinded ones and cripples be."
That others bear the crosses to thank Thee!
Have mercy, Lord, have mercy upon us!

Forgive us all. We know not what we say.
None are so ignorant, dear God, as they
Who bend to Thee, yet know not what they pray.
Have pity, Lord, and mercy upon us!

AUGUST

IT is the month of falling stars,
Of golden days and silver nights,
Of sunsets wrought of rose and pearl,
And fired with opal lights.

The splendor deepens day by day,
Larger each night the languid moon
Swims silently thro' ether deeps
Less blue than those of June.

In little creamy, tossing drifts,
Dog-fennel blossoms everywhere;
The perfume of the wild, rich musk
Is spilt along the air.

The pale pink eglantine is gone,
The sweet-pea pods burst in the sun;
The crimson poppy petals fade
And scatter, one by one.

But seas of yarrow rise and fall,
And all along the country ways
The generous golden-rod uplifts
Her bright and plumy sprays.

On rocky ledges o'er the sea
The columbine no longer swings,
But there the blue-bell silently
Her wordless vesper rings.

Each month has her own ravishments,
And August has the mellow moon,
And stars that fall thro' ether deeps
Less blue than those of June.

The dim, sweet, golden distances
With rose and purple faintly sown,
The wind's low, hesitating note —
These things are August's own.

LOVE

BEFORE Love came —
(*The rose lifts up its head and longs for rain*)
Before Love came I sang of Love —
Its joy, its pain.

But when Love came —
(*The rose beneath the longed-for rain is bent*)
But when Love came — its joy, its pain —
All my song went.

THE POET AND THE STAR

POET sang to a star,
  Ay, sang out his soul — to die;
But ever the crimson heart
  Of the star beat in the sky.

The poet sang to one star,
  Ay, sang out his soul — alone;
But the star with the crimson heart
  For a world of poets shone.

TWO PRAYERS

LORD, I have often prayed
One deep wrong to forget;
And Thou hast granted me that prayer,
And I should thank Thee, yet —

To-night, O God, I kneel,
Of conscience-torment free,
And with a clearer knowledge make
A later, stronger plea:

Let me remember, God,
Though that drive peace from me!
To rise above myself, I need
The scourge of memory.

JUNE

WEET-LIPPED she comes across the purpling land,
With laughter that is shaken thro' with tears;
Bearing within the pink cup of her hand
Attar of pleasures pluck'd from sweeter years.

THE LAMP IN THE WEST

ENUS has lit her silver lamp
Low in the purple West,
Breathing a soft and mellow light
Upon the sea's full breast;
It is the hour when velvet winds
Tremble the alder's crest.

Far out, far out the restless bar
Starts from a troubled sleep,
Where roaring thro' the narrow straits
The meeting waters leap;
But still that shining pathway leads
Across the lonely deep.

When I sail out the narrow straits
Where unknown dangers be,
And cross the troubled, moaning bar
To the mysterious sea —
Dear God, wilt thou not set a lamp
Low in the West for me?

THE SIMPLE CREED OF CHRIST

"HAVE I not worked, O God?
Have I not toiled and borne?
Sackcloth for secret sin
Have I not worn?

"Have I not dwelt and knelt
In bitterness alone—
Eating my Dead-Sea fruit—
And made no moan?

"Have I not plead for strength
My punishment to bear,
Pressing my heart's wild cry
Thro' midnight air?

"Night after night, O God,
Have I not laid me prone,
Brow bent upon the floor—
Yet made no moan?

"The stony way thou gavest
Have I not bravely trod?
Have I breathed one reproach,
O God, O God?

"Hast Thou e'er known my feet
The cruelest thorn to shun?
Have I not bled, and said—
'*Thy will be done*'?

"Yea, when the deepest hurt
Festered in my heart's core,
'This I deserved,' I said;
'All this—and more.'

"In my supremest pain,
Repentance and despair,
My deepest plea has been
For strength to bear.

"Strength to endure my sin
And eat its fruits, and live—
This and the wilder cry
Of '*Lord, forgive!*'

"What more can I do, God,
To win from pain release?
What more, O God, what more
For peace, for peace?"

So prayed the woman. Pale
Was she, and thin and worn,
And hollow-browed and eyed,
And passion-torn.

And — "Child," God answered her,
"When first thou asked of me —
Truly repenting all —
I forgave thee.

"One more thing thou must have,
And that is Faith. Deplore
Thy sins no longer. *Go* —
And sin no more."

"MY VINEYARD WHICH WAS MINE IS BEHIND ME"

MY vineyard lies behind me, and I toil
Across the barren land;
My lips are parched and thirsty, and my feet
Sink deep in burning sand.

If I could but remember as I go
My vineyard-keeper's face,
With that proud look which once for me it wore,
So full of trust and grace!

But adding torture to each bleeding step,
At night, at noon, at morn,
I see and see, shrink from it as I will,
That one last look of scorn.

I think, perhaps, I could endure the thirst,
The blistering sand and skies;
But O my God! spare me the supreme pain
Of remembering those eyes.

TWO

HE toiled up Calvary with her cross —
Bending beneath its weight,
Patient, undaunted, to the top
Nor murmured at her fate.

She toiled up Calvary with her cross,
In anguish and in pain;
The world of men her courage praised
And cheered — I heard them plain.

But while men shout her praises loud,
And flowers at her feet toss,
Pity, O God, the feebler one
Who sank beneath her cross.

BESIDE THE SEA

AILY the fishers' sails drift out
Upon the ocean's breast,
But nightly, like white courier doves,
They all come home to rest.

Would my lost faith and trust in thee
Were sails far out the main, —
That in these lonely, sleepless nights
They might come home again.

PARTING

A WORDLESS PRAYER

LORD, Lord, we cannot pray to-night,
Our lips are reft of speech,
But we two clinging, shaking, kneel,
Hearts beating each on each.

There are deep kisses on our lips,
Deep with all chaste desire,
And every vein is running full
With keen, delicious fire.

And oh, the pulses in our palms!—
Feel, God, how strong they beat!
How can we bid our lips to pray
In hours so silent-sweet?

But though we cannot pray to-night,
Each kiss is one deep plea
That Thou wilt keep me true to him,
And him — Lord, Lord! — to me.

DECEMBER

FLIGHT of snow-birds huddling North,
Etched on the dull gray atmosphere,
Against the dull gray, sullen sky.
Across the wide and frozen mere,
Upon whose blue and languorous breast
The water-lilies dreamed in June,
The wind among the bended reeds
Plays a shrill, high and lonely tune.

Level and brown the meadows stretch
Between the hills of needled fir;
Only bare branches bend and toss,
Where all the summer's blossoms were;
In stubble fields the cattle stand
With drooping heads behind the stacks,
And horses' feet strike crimson sparks,
As they spring down the frozen tracks.

One maple tree stands gray and cold,
With thin arms to the sky outflung —
Ah, me! It seems but yesterday
That wild birds in its branches sung,
Loved, mated, nested; later, taught
The rapture of their own sweet notes —
A very ravishment of song —
To little tremulous, startled throats.

With mournful cries the wild geese fly,
Hurrying to the red-lipped South.
The only warmth — one crimson rose,
Sweet as a woman's unkissed mouth.
The bleak tide-lands and grieving gulls,
Where once blue waves and sunlight were . . .
And in my breast a memory,
Where once was that glad heart of her.

THE CZAR OF ALL THE RUSSIAS

"THE Czar is dying!" . . . And the long day passed,
And Dusk came up the awful Russian plain
And dimmed the palace where the Czar at last
Lay bound with thongs of pain.

The hours stole by, and the attendants slept;
For a brief space the monarch was alone.
Elsewhere the worn Czarina sobbed and wept
In stifled undertone.

The Czar of all the Russias — even he! —
Lay suffering torture with each labored breath;
Soon to be stripped of all his majesty
For the majesty of Death.

"A wise and noble Ruler," Europe said . . .
And of a sudden trembles many a throne
Which will have lost a friend when he is dead
Who lieth there alone.

But thro' the night what awful sounds are these
That on his dying ear now break and swell,
Like voices caught and borne upon the breeze
From spirits out of hell?

What is this long procession stumbling past
With bleeding feet and outcries of despair—
Wan-eyed, white-lipped, with faces all aghast,
And rent and tangled hair?

Great God, what prayers mount the silent night
From those thin lips! What tears those wild eyes weep!
What curses from those corded throats and white
Burst strong and fierce and deep!

Oh, see the bare backs guttered by the knout!
The prints of blood where those torn feet have trod!
Pure women spat upon, their strength worn out —
Dost Thou see these things, God?

The Czar of all the Russias sees them — ay,
Although his eyes are swiftly growing dim;
Those anguished prayers breathed to the silent sky
Are audible to him.

He sees old men with bare and mangled backs
Go staggering on with neither sleep nor rest;
The fainting mothers falling in their tracks
With starved lips at the breast.

Who are these ghosts? Have they come up from hell
Across Siberian steppes once more to bleed?
To crouch at last in a foul prison cell,
On tortured thought to feed?

The Czar — the Czar of all the Russias — knows.

* * * * * * *

Attendants, ho! Awake! the Czar is dead!
Straighten the body and the wild eyes close —
Set the crown above the head!

Now, every wretch beneath Siberian star —
Give praise to Heaven with uplifted head!
Thank God, thank God, that all the Russias' Czar
Is dead — is dead — is dead!

"THE EVERGREEN STATE"

Y chosen state, to thee—
Cleft by the Opal Sea,
Evergreen state!
Land of the emerald ferns,
Land where the sunset burns—
To thee my heart e'er turns,
With thee I wait.

When sunset fires thy peaks,
Mountain to mountain speaks—
"Dark hours are near!"
But when the night is done
Rays of soft color run
Up from the rising sun,—
Flashing—"Good cheer!"

Thy future shall be grand,
Arise and take thy stand —
  Strong, proud and free!
In the world's march, keep tread
Where Truth's white star has led,
Let no hard word be said,
  Ever, of thee!

All thy mistakes are past,
Lift up thy head at last —
  Smile thro' thy tears!
Thy darkest hour is gone,
Hail, hail the golden dawn —
Press on thy course, and on
  Thro' all the years!

ALWAYS SOME ONE BELOW

ON the lowest round of the ladder
I silently set my feet,
And looked into the dim, high distance
That made my future sweet.

I climbed till my vision grew weary,
I climbed till my brain was on fire,
I mounted with caution and wisdom —
Yet I never seemed to get higher.

For this round was glazed with indifference,
And that round was gilded with scorn,
And when I grasped firmly another
I found under velvet a thorn.

Till my brain grew weary of planning,
And my heart-strength began to fail,
And the flush of the morning's excitement
Ere evening commenced to pale.

But just as my hands were unclasping
Their hold on the last gainéd round,
And my hopes, coming back from the future,
Were sinking again to the ground,

One, close to the top of the ladder,
Reached downward a helping hand,
And refreshed, encouraged and strengthened,
I took once again my stand.

And I wish — oh, I wish — that the climbers
Would never forget as they go
That, though weary may seem their climbing,
There is always some one below.

THE WRECK OF THE *PREMIER*

PON the wide dull water-stretch
The deep fog sank and lay,
The firs along the rugged shore,
Climbed out like spectres gray,
And the hoarse voice of the *Premier* called,
Pleading, across the bay.

Each heart upon the fated ship
Leaped into that wild cry,
And tears of mingled hope and fear
Trembled in every eye,
And lips that would not pray, yet prayed
In a deep, unconscious sigh.

Oh, but the voice in that swart throat
Plead passionate and strong!
And the bell-buoy farther out to sea
Tolled mournfully and long! . . .

One poor mute mother by her dead
Knelt in that white-faced throng.

Only the dead upon the decks
Heard not that passioned call,
They that had suddenly grown wise,
Indifferent to all —
Complaining not tho' the chill fog
Spread o'er them her gray pall.

At last came level-browed Despair
And sate our hearts among.
Then there were some, bereft of hope,
That wept, or prayed, or sung;
And still across the sullen sea
That supplication rung.

But of a sudden thro' the dark
Came the strong, thrilling cry
Of a pilot steering straight for us
And signalling — "Ay, ay!"
As if he bade us — "Be of cheer
And not afraid — *'tis I!*"

Oh, bent was every knee that hour
And bowed was every head;
The mother stirred, and her pale lips
Prayed now above her dead;
And then she wept — as if the prayer
Her grief had softenéd.

Thou shipwreck'd soul upon Life's sea —
Call to thy pilot so!
Call long and loud, and call again,
And if thou doubtest, lo!
Call once again . . . and still once more . . .
He'll answer thee . . . I know.

A FAIRY'S LOVE-SONG

H, fireflies, fireflies, light all your candles,
For down, deep down in the sea's wet bed,
The wise little fishes have lighted their lanterns,
And luminous jellyfish tents are spread.

I know not the way that my sweetheart is coming,
Over the mountain or vale or sea,
But if o'er the water, I know that the fishes
Swing tiny gold lanterns to light him to me.

The nights are deceptive and dangers are lurking—
Fireflies, fireflies, trim every lamp!
And red little glow-worms, keep watch in the marshes,
Down where the highways are dark and damp.

For he may come over the purple-rimmed mountain,
  Riding astride of a buffeted leaf;
Or over the sea on a gull's snowy feather
  That any wild hour may be dashed on a reef!

And heaven, dear heaven, in each of thy windows
  Set a star burning — I know not the day
Or the night, or the hour, that my sweetheart is coming,
  So light him and guide him upon his way.

FINIS

"THE night is black and cold and wet,
The winter winds are strong and wild,
And in the grave beside my own
This noon they laid a little child —
So low, so low, so dark and deep,
This narrow box that I lie in;
I cannot turn, I cannot weep,
My chest is sunk, my face is thin.

"I hear the wind shriek through the trees,
I hear the hurrying sheets of rain;
I beat my bony, fleshless hands,
And feel my eyeballs burn and strain.
I see again my blazing hearth,
And its red light strike up the wall;
I see you lonely in your chair,
I hear again your tender call.

"Not God, but only fools, would think
A grave could hold us two apart;
I'll burst this lid, and by God's help
Beat my way back into your heart!" . . .
She burst the lid with bleeding hands
And bruiséd breast, and dug her way,
Slow, and with patience, inch by inch,
Up through the clammy, yellow clay.

Then, strong and eager, struggled down
The hill, against the tempest's wrath,
Into the still, white town below —
How well she knew that narrow path!
Then paused, uncertain, at the gate
Of that dear place where she had dwelt,
And wondered if her room were changed,
Or that white bed where she had knelt,

And tried — and half forgot — to pray,
Or failed to keep her thoughts above,
Because one waited for her lips —
Because two hearts beat fast with love. . . .

She fancied how he sat alone,
With head down-dropped upon his breast,
And grieving lips, and saddened eyes,
And mourned for her, and found no rest.

She lightly entered, leaped the stair,
Not one small nook had she forgot,
Into the warmth of her old room —
But those two saw her, heard her, not.
In her old chair beside the hearth
He sat, and kneeling at his side —
Tender and lovely as a dream —
The dead wife saw the living bride.

Then crept she sobbing up the hill,
Back to the City of the Dead.
"O fool! To strive against God's will!
Lie in thy grave, content!" she said. . . .
And in the cottage down the hill
The bridegroom stirred in strange unrest,
And thought of one in a storm-swept grave,
With "Finis" carven o'er her breast.

"WHERE CAN SHE BE?"

AFTER the baby died the house seemed dark
And cold, as if the sun had passed it by,
Even though the month was June, and not a cloud
Troubled the brightness of the golden sky.

And it was, oh! so lonely and so still.
The kitten, undisturbed, curled on the floor,
And fifty times a day with questioning eyes
The old house-dog came to the open door,

And looked as if he said: "Why, where is Nell —
The little girl that used to play with me?
And pull my curls, and clasp my faithful neck
With tender, loving arms — where can she be?"

There was a new note in the plaintive song
Her pet canary sang all day to me —
A note that said: "That little merry girl,
Whose laugh was music sweet — where can she be?"

The very wind that blew from off the hills
Stole grieving thro' the house, most lonesomely,
And sighed: "Where are the tangled curls I tossed,
The warm red cheeks I cooled—where can they be?"

Her doll sleeps in its little snowy bed—
Her oldest, shabbiest doll she loved the best—
Just as she "tucked it in" the last, last time,
With many a pat and kiss upon it pressed.

And oh, how often every day the tears
Come leaping up to my poor, aching eyes,
And I go groping blindly to that bed,
That tiny bed where her "dear dolly" lies,

And lay my face close to its battered face,
Which her dear tears and kisses washed like rain—
Yet mindful not to change one bit of lace—
And weep and sob, and weep and sob again.

And then, remembering in my bitter grief
Somewhere, perhaps, some other "dolly" lies—
Its little mother gone—I pray: "O God,
Be in the lonely homes—when baby dies!"

WHERE HUDSON SWEEPS BETWEEN THE HILLS

STILL, still I see the purple dust
Blown thro' the golden air
Where Hudson sweeps between the hills
In emerald verdure fair,
And the sunset flings from peak to peak
The red mesh of her hair.

Still, still I hear the robins sing
With raindrops in their throats,
While in the ether's tender blue
A soft cloud-body floats —
Its loosened fragments sailing on
Like little silver boats.

I know how high the cool waves reach
To lip the bending shore;
And how the sweet wistarias blow
In beauty evermore;

I know how leisurely the sun
  Stoops thro' the West's red door.

I know how rich and deep the nap
  Is on each velvet lawn,
And how the swallows' liquid notes
  Are in the eaves at dawn;
And how the first pale primrose rays
  Are down the valley drawn.

Though far from thy blue tossing arms,
  Dear Hudson, and the light
That sits upon the morning hills,
  And the stars that each calm night
Shine in the dimples of thy breast
  Like jewels soft and bright,

Still do I hold deep in my heart
  One lost and perfect June,
When lightly thro' thy singing waves
  Swam the young slender moon —
When all the music of my soul
  To thee was set in tune.

THE "DROPPING-SONG" OF THE MOCKING-BIRD

TO MR. MAURICE THOMPSON

HALF rousing from my sleep by a far Northern sea,
Blown through the perfumed Southern silences, I heard,
Across my waking dreams, the tremulous, drowsy notes
Of the enthralling nocturn of the mocking-bird.

Then suddenly I heard a shivering of the leaves,
Where leaves were not, and a most marvellous, full song
Of lyric fire and rapt, delicious ecstasy,
That throbbed within my veins, sweet, passionate, and long.

So I have heard thy singer's "dropping-song," O South,
Though I have never breathed the soft winds off thy sea!
Even as a monk knows sweetness of a woman's mouth
In dreams — so have I known a bird's love-ecstasy.

THAT OTHER PRAYER

OMETIMES I kneel when twilight falls,
And try to ask the Lord
To lean one moment from above
And hear my trembling word;
But scarcely have I knelt, when quick
Springs that old aching care,
And with a tremble on my lips,
I pray that other prayer.

With that old choke within my throat,
Those old hot, useless tears,
With which I used to kneel and say
That prayer in other years;
With the same beating of my heart,
Bowed by the same fierce care,
And the old tremble on my lips,
I pray that other prayer.

It was not answered — nay; and I
Now would not have it so,
And that is why God heard it not,
And it was best, yet, oh!
So often in that sky-lit room
With walls so cold and bare,
With that poor tremble on my lips,
I prayed that other prayer!

And so, tho' it was answered not,
And old desire is dead,
I cannot kneel these happier nights
Beside this other bed,
But the quick choke comes to my throat,
Vibrant to that old care,
And ere I know, with trembling lips,
I've prayed that other prayer!

TO ONE LEAVING FOR SWEDEN

HEN soft and deep in Sweden's skies
Moons burn like golden fire,
And the nightingale thrills all the wood
With exquisite desire,

Turn, turn upon thy pillow then,
And think how dark and still
The firs wait for the rising moon
On lonely Sehome hill.

Turn from thy song-bird's ravishment—
And think how mournfully
The night-hawk blows its lonely note
By Puget's lonely sea.

THE AWAKENING

WILL take heart again; the spring
Comes over Sehome hill,
And like tall, splintered spears of gold
The firs stand, soft and still;
Happily in its moist, brown throat
Chatters a loosened rill.

Below, across the violet sea,
With glistening, restless wings,
The seabirds cleave the purple air
In white and endless rings;
Somewhere, within an open space,
One of God's own larks sings.

The warm breath of the waking earth
Curls up from myriad lips,
And who has loved and lost now drinks
In deep and trembling sips,

With memory's passionate pulse astir
From heart to finger-tips.

The ferns lift delicate veiny palms
In dimples of the hills,
The spendthrift hyacinth's perfume
Along the pure air spills;
There is a breathing, faint and far,
From the dark throats of the mills.

The spider flings a glittering thread
From dewy blade to blade,
A robin drops on bended wing,
Near me, yet unafraid;
The early frosts have taken rout
Before the red sun's raid.

Behold, the earth is glad again,
And she has taken heart,
And in her swelling, fruitful breast,
God's own love-flowers start.
(Lord, may I not take courage, too?
I and my old self part?)

Yea, when the birds grow dumb again
With pure delights that thrill
Their rapt and innocent souls, till they
Have not desire or will
For song, or sun, or anything
But passion deep and still,

I will go into the dim wood
And lie prone on the sod,
My breast close to the warm earth-breast,
Prostrate, alone with God,
Of all his poor and useless ones,
The poorest, useless clod;

And I will pray (so earnestly
He cannot help but hear):
"Lord, Lord, let me take heart again,
Let my faith shine white and clear,
Let me awaken with the earth,
And leave my old self here!"

LOST

HAS any one found a dream?
It was lost I know not where —
And alas! I know not how —
So dear, so sweet, so fair!

I have sought for it in vain,
Yea, weeks and months and years;
Eager one day with hope —
The next, bowed down with tears.

God made it — no one else.
Not one on earth could make
A thing so dear its loss
A woman's heart could break.

Has any one found it? Speak.
It was white as the whitest dove.
All else is offered for it!
Its name, I think, was — Love.

THE SNOW

FOR weeks the snow went riding by,
Borne on the high, shrill winds
That seethed thro' cracks and eddied the grain
In the farmer's well-filled bins,
Or mourned — poor outcasts of the night —
As a penitent for his sins.

For weeks the snow spun round the hill,
And settled on the lea;
It climbed up high about the doors,
And spangled every tree;
It reached one soft, white, jewelled arm
Around the cold, dark sea.

It deepened on the frozen mere
And on the frozen bay;
And on the porches and the roofs
Unevenly it lay,

Until the wind sprang from the North
And carried it away,

And bore it, hissing, up the air
In a long, funnelled whirl;
Or pressed its bulk around some tree
In a deep, voluptuous curl;
Or hurried it down to the South
In a nervous, blinding swirl.

Long icicles grew, drop on drop,
And hung from all the eaves,
And every pane was frescoed o'er
With pictures Zero weaves —
Like cobwebs, when the heavy frost
Is on the autumn leaves.

And still the snow fell on the fields
That once were sweet with hay,
And on the lawn where, soft and deep,
Once cherry blossoms lay . . .
And on the grave of the little child
That laughed with us last May.

ENDURING

MADE this bitter bread myself,
The flour was fine and white;
How could I guess such bitterness
Dwelt in a thing so light?

With my own hands I pluck'd the grapes
That spilled this awful wine;
They looked so tempting and so sweet,
Purpling upon the vine.

But since my own self made the bread,
Myself pluck'd every grape,
I eat and drink — their bitterness
I seek not to escape.

But sometimes in my loneliness
With lifted, praying eyes,
I sing the dear, remembered sweets
Of my lost paradise.

As some poor, starving bird, perchance,
  Crouching on broken wing,
With sudden passionate memory
  Of highest heaven might sing.

But ere the last note breaks and dies
  I bow myself and drink
This awful wine, and eat this bread —
  And murmur not nor shrink.

THE LOW BROWN HILLS

I DID not love them overmuch
Till I had turned away,
But now they glimmer thro' my dreams,
They haunt the summer day —
The low brown hills, the bare brown hills
Of San Francisco Bay.

My heart ached for their barrenness,
Their browns veined thro' with gray;
No tree where some sweet Western bird
Might sit and sing his lay —
But low brown hills and bare brown hills
Of San Francisco Bay.

Not one slim blade of living green
To make the soft slopes gay;
No dim secluded forest dells
Where one might kneel and pray —
But low brown hills and bare brown hills
Of San Francisco Bay.

But ah, their hold upon my heart
Now I am far away!
They glimmer thro' my dreams at night,
They haunt the summer day —
The low brown hills, the bare brown hills
Of San Francisco Bay.

Tell me the secret of this charm
That ever night and day,
From greener lands and sweeter lands
Draws thought and dream away
To the low brown hills, the bare brown hills
Of San Francisco Bay.

THE COMING OF SPRING

NCE more Spring's dear, remembered thrill
The winter's heart went through —
Out came the willow silverly
And white the shad-bush blew.

A voice went thro' the emerald land
And "Wake, wake, Robin," cried;
A brook burst out in laughter sweet,
And straight the winter sighed.

The gay wild-currant saucily
Came stepping out in red —
A dear, delicious light-o'-love,
With blushes overspread.

A little meadow that I know
Ran suddenly to gold,
Till every lifted buttercup
Had more than it could hold.

The yellow finches perched and sang
Their few notes sweet and loud,
Or drifted up against the blue —
A bright, melodious cloud.

But oh, but oh, the meadow-lark!
And oh, the song he sang!
All rapture, passion, tenderness
Ached thro' me while it rang.

And as I listening bowed my head
To hide the springing tear,
Lo, all about me — violets!
And Spring herself was here.

SONNETS

YET AM I NOT FOR PITY

I

FOR me there are no cities, no proud halls,
No storied paintings — nor the chiselled snow
Of statues; never have I seen the glow
Of sunset die upon the deathless walls
Of the pure Parthenon; no soft light falls
For me in dim cathedrals, where the low,
Still seas of supplication ebb and flow;
No dream of Rome my longing soul enthralls.
But oh, to gaze in a long tranced delight
On Venice rising from the purple sea!
Oh, but to feel one golden evening pale
On that famed island from whose lonely height
Dark Sappho sank in burning ecstasy!
But once — but once — to hear the nightingale!

II

Yet am I not for pity. This blue sea
Burns with the opal's deep and splendid fires
At sunset; these tall firs are classic spires
Of chaste design and marvellous symmetry
That lift to burnished skies. Let pity be
For him who never felt the mighty lyres
Of Nature shake him thro' with great desires.
These pearl-topped mountains shining silently —
They are God's sphinxes and God's pyramids;
These dim-aisled forests His cathedrals, where
The pale nun Silence tiptoes, velvet-shod,
And Prayer kneels with tireless, parted lids;
And thro' the incense of this holy air
Trembling — I have come face to face with God.

AN AUTUMN DAY

HE sunlight pales upon the ragged ferns
And the dog-fennel's creamy drifts of snow,
And two white butterflies — child-spirits — go
Winging their ways. The maple forest burns
Along the mountainside — so red it turns
The very air to crimson. Sweet and low
The brooks go singing, loitering as they flow,
And all the hollow stumps are rustic urns
Heaped to their scalloped brims with yellow leaves.
In every pasture lifts the golden-rod
Its bending plumes; the fields are reft of sheaves
Where late the merry gleaners, singing, trod.
One broken frond of mist the soft air cleaves —
The year's last incense pushing up to God.

GOING BLIND

NE time I heard a tender story told
About a mother who was going blind,
And ere the light went out forever, signed
Unto her children — while the sunset's gold
In burning ribbons down the West unrolled —
To gather close about, that she might trace
The lines upon each well-belovéd face,
That after — so I heard the story told —
Sun, moon, and stars, and all dear things might fade,
And still their faces clearly be outlined
Against the golden background of that day.
Then came long night — but she was not afraid,
And ever answered — "Nay, I am not blind;
My children's faces star my lonely way."

THE SPENT YEAR

THE russet ferns toss in the chilly rain,
The dense cloud-fragments break along the hill;
The golden-rod is gone, the bees are still;
The screaming sea-gulls toil across the main,
And, like poor shipwrecked souls, seek peace again.
The lonely waves beat on the lonely shore,
And hark! far out — the desolate ocean's roar!
Shrill winds among the naked trees complain,
What time I walk deserted ways. Behold!
It is the dreariest time of heart and year —
The promise broken and the faith grown cold! . . .
Yet still does each feel underneath the tear
A something stirring, veined with fire and gold —
The deathless heart of Spring, beating with cheer.

THE SUMMONS

LAST night, while sunset burned across the land
And lit with glowing mystery the sea,
I slept; and in my dreams I saw her stand
At heaven's western archway, wistfully.
She pushed the crimson cloud-portières aside
With a still movement of her slender arm,
Sickling one hand above her dear eyes, wide
With that deep sweetness wherein lay her charm
Of old, and sent a long look thro' the maze
Of blending rose and violet and gold,
While close about her pink cloud-draperies rolled.
Looked, leaned and beckoned. Then — a blur of haze!
The clouds burned down to ashes gray and sere,
And waking — lo! I heard Death's breathing near.

HE TO HER

EAR, my beloved, lying, oh, so still,
As if asleep, upon thy lilied bier,
With eyelids resting like twin snowflakes chill
Upon the eyes where once the lovelight clear
Shone like a beacon set upon a hill —
Showing me how among the reefs to steer,
Guiding me, oh, so tenderly until
My wandering heart sank glad to anchor here
In thy dear heart! Oh, pure and sweet and true!
No foolish tears from my hot eyelids start;
I have no sobs; no wild outbursts are mine;
Only one sound shakes all this still place through:
The slow and awful beating of my heart,
Breaking to feel the answering beat of thine.

INDIAN SUMMER

LIKE palest gold the mellow sunlight creeps
Across the porch and thro' the open door,
And spreads a checkered carpet on the floor.
The garden's last red poppy, nodding, sleeps,
And one bee in its heart his senses steeps,
With most delicious languor; one slim stalk
Of hollyhock still bends beside the walk,
Starred with its lovely flowers. In soft heaps —
Like sweet, dead dreams — wind-shaken rose-leaves lie;
The opal's fire burns in the clouds that float
Across the delicate azure of the sky.
The wind is one low, soft Æolian note;
And yellower than the primrose East at morn,
Stretch the wide, undulating fields of corn.

DELILAH

ARE shoulders swelling out of scarlet silk;
A slender, supple throat, whereon is set
A perfect, dark-crowned head; like uncreamed milk,
When fallen rose and poppy leaves have met
And mingled on its surface, is her skin.
Her arms are softer than soft velvets are;
Deep dimpled are her cheeks and her round chin,
And never yet has any real star
Shone like the gems that in her bosom rest. . . .
But the slow-lifted eyelid breaks the spell,
And lets the serpent thro' its fair disguise —
Soft flesh, soft throat, soft arms, delicious breast!
Beware! Beware! the fires of deepest hell
Burn in those amber, flower-lidded eyes.

THANKSGIVING

H, some give thanks for barns and garners heaped
Up to their raftered peaks with ripened grain;
Wan sufferers from drouth give thanks for rain;
Others — alas! — for passionate pleasures, steeped
In wine of lotus bloom. Some that have reaped
Their evil sowing in unbearable pain
Breathe thanks for one brief moment's peace again;
The prisoner, for the ray of light that leaped
Athwart the darkness of his lonely cell,
Like Hope's pale ghost. Beside her chaste, white bed
The maiden kneels, her thanks — like beads — to tell.
The old and poor give thanks for life and bread;
And the young mother, for the lips now pressed
To drain sweet strength from her glad, throbbing breast.

DAWN ON THE WILLAMETTE

BETWEEN the pale blue of the morning sky
And the soft, deeper violet of the hill
Mount Hood stands like a virgin, white and still.
The purple mists across the valley lie,
Run thro' and thro' with primrose lances — ay,
With rose and amethyst. Sweet, loud and shrill,
With little swelling throats, the dawn-birds trill
Their glad hearts out in praise; and proud and high,
The sun vibrates into the blue, and sets
Willamette burning like a chain of brass,
And all the steeples into silhouettes
Of flame against the sky. Up from the grass
A pilgrim skylark soars, and throbbing higher,
Shakes all the air with passion and desire.

A DREAM OF SAPPHO

THE little hollows in the pavements shine
With the soft, hesitating April rain,
That sifts across the city, gray and fine,
And on the huddling, spent waves of the main,—
Where the wild, silver seabirds wheel and scream.
It is a day to lie before the fire,
Turning the key on Thought and Care, and dream
Of dark-eyed Sappho and her passioned lyre;
Her sun-warmed courts columned above the sea;
Blue skies of Lesbos—ay, and of the kiss
Of the South wind among her bower's leaves.
Who could regret the day's monotony,
In the full rapture of a dream like this—
Set to the faltering music of the eaves!

APRIL NIGHT

GOD calls the day. Soft, luminous and slow,
The great sun trembles down the trembling West
And leaves its gold upon the ocean's breast.
Into the East, in one white, chastened glow,
Rises the silver moon — as yet so low
It seems to draw itself free of the trees.
The golden-cups are drenched with dew; the breeze
Is sweet with last night's rain; and blown with snow
The fruit trees stand, pure as a dream of love,
Or kisses of a child; their pale blooms fall —
Still, petaled stars — across the purple light.
And listen — hush! Somewhere a mourning-dove
Is plaining to the silence and the night —
A human heart-break in her grieving call.

HE SPEAKS AT PARTING

COME close; come closer yet — for the last time;
And reach thy soft arms round my shoulders — so;
And if thou speak'st at all, speak very low.
And give me now thy lips — for the last time —
The last, and so the very tenderest!
Lift, lift from those dear eyes the petaled snow,
And let thy passion kindle therein, slow
And tender-deep. Lean closer on my breast,
Belovéd, this sweet-bitter parting hour!
God! if I might in this white dove-cote dwell —
Forever feel this innocent bosom's swell! . . .
Lo! as a bee goes from a clover flow'r
Drunken thro' greed, and heavily swooning — so,
Heavy with sweets as chaste, I staggering go.

A PERFECT DAY

IT is a day lost from some perfect June
And set within the middle of November.
It has the golden mystery of September,
And the blue skies of a warm summer noon.
There is a low wind singing an old tune,
Sung once by tender winds that I remember;
The soft, high sun burns like a crimson ember
Deep in the blue flame of the air. . . . So soon
A gray and lonely morrow will arise,
This fair day well is worth the holding fast.
Behold! how dreamily the mute sea lies
Below; how seabirds lazily drift past;
And how the mountains, white for centuries,
Shine on the sky. . . . O day, that thou might'st
last!

"THE OPAL SEA"

AN inland sea — blue as a sapphire — set
Within a sparkling, emerald mountain chain
Where day and night fir-needles sift like rain
Thro' the voluptuous air. The soft winds fret
The waves, and beat them wantonly to foam.
The golden distances across the sea
Are shot with rose and purple. Languorously
The silver seabirds in wide circles roam.
The sun drops slowly down the flaming West
And flings its rays across to set aglow
The islands rocking on the cool waves' crest
And the great glistening domes of snow on snow.
And thro' the mist the Olympics flash and float
Like opals linked around a beating throat.

A DREAM

I LAY last night and heard the ceaseless rain
Drip in soft rhythm from the ragged eaves
And musically play upon the leaves;
The rose-vines trembled on my window-pane,
And lost from some wild tempest on the plain
Spent winds came dying up the quiet lea.
Across the tide-lands ebbed the shivering sea,
And knowing the midnight hour was on the wane,
Sighing, I turned and slept, and, sleeping, dreamed. . . .
Straight thro' the dark thou camest, as of old,
Trembling, yet eager; strong to claim thine own;
The same pure rapture in thy deep eyes beamed.
I ran to meet thee . . . then a clear bell tolled,
And I awoke — forevermore alone!

A SONNET

WRITE a sonnet? But a sonnet, dear,
May be the breaking of an Easter morn;
Or a low wind among the ripening corn
When russet silk tops each green-golden ear;
A white, white flower laid upon a bier
By one whose love dwelt from the world apart;
Or a bee-ravished clover-blossom's heart;
A glance met once; a voice so sweet and clear
Its memory lives thro' all forgotten years;
A lonely nighthawk calling to the night;
The red flash of a star in downward flight;
The trampling thunder of a mighty sea;
Or a wild prayer shaken thro' with tears . .
Or this long kiss upon the lips of thee!

SLEEP

SLEEP, sweet Sleep — lean downward unto me,
And lay thy cool touch on my fevered cheek.
Lay all thy fair length close to me, and speak
Thy language, soft and drowsy as the sea
That steals up tide-lands slow and lullingly.
O Sleep, kind Sleep — lean down and press thy lips
On my tired eyes; let thy cool finger-tips
Still my hot temples' throb, — ay, let me be
Cradled within thy arms. . . . And bid me think
Of clovered banks where long, still shadows creep;
Of lotus blossoms lolling on a stream;
Of tinkling brooks where thirsty cattle drink;
Of drowsy poppy-fields. . . . And bid me dream
Of him I love, O Sleep, O gentle Sleep!

THE GRAND RONDE VALLEY

H, me! I know how like a golden flower
The Grand Ronde valley lies this August night,
Locked in by dimpled hills where purple light
Lies wavering. There at the sunset hour
Sink downward, like a rainbow-tinted shower,
A thousand colored rays, soft, changeful, bright.
Later the large moon rises, round and white,
And three Blue Mountain pines against it tower,
Lonely and dark. A coyote's mournful cry
Sinks from the cañon — whence the river leaps,
A blade of silver underneath the moon.
Like restful seas the yellow wheat-fields lie,
Dreamless and still. And while the valley sleeps,
O hear! — the lullabies that low winds croon.

THE NEW WEST

TAND up, my West! Lift thy young, noble head
On the strong pillar of thy proud, white throat,
And let thy gold hair on the sea-winds float.
In the world's march, keep step with lofty tread
And firm. If passion from the South has fled,
And from the North and East, there yet remains
Its leaping fire in thy full, swelling veins.
If others have forgot the flag that led
To independent freedom, and now fail
To stand in their own strength and pride, and try
To ape the older nations, thou, my West,
Stand true — nor let thy stern eyes ever quail,
As long as thou hast breath for freedom's cry,
And a strong, passionate heart within thy breast.

A PRAYER OF THE HEART

GOD, lean downward to my couch this night —
This awful night of nights — and hear the prayer
That fain would struggle up the startled air,
To vex thine ear, from my lips dumb and white
With pain. Lean down from heaven's lone delight,
And lay thy listening ear to my throat — where
The passionate words stop, voiceless in despair.
God, Thou can'st hear and understand aright
All that my tortured heart would ask of Thee.
Put out the fires that leap along my veins,
And bid this beating of my pulses cease!
Take, take these maddening dreams away from me,
And cool my eyes with tears like gentle rains . . .
Hear Thou my wordless prayer! God, give me peace!

THE LAST MESSAGE OF SUMMER

THE dandelion's last pale lamp is lit
In lowly places where field-daisies blow.
Over the wind-blown drifts of yarrow-snow,
In yellow clouds the wild canaries flit—
A farewell lilting thro' their softened notes.
High in the faint blue ether swims the sun;
The sweet-pea pods are bursting, one by one;
The bees cling, drunken, to the poppies' throats,
And oh! the winds are low among the ferns.
A golden mist is sifting thro' the pines,
And grapes are pregnant with their stirring wines;
But in the womb of summer sleeps the spring!
And one lark sings, where yonder maple burns—
"Another year another hope will bring!"

DAWN

THE soft-toned clock upon the stair chimed three —
Too sweet for sleep, too early yet to rise.
In restful peace I lay with half-closed eyes,
Watching the tender hours go dreamily;
The tide was flowing in; I heard the sea
Shivering along the sands; while yet the skies
Were dim, uncertain, as the light that lies
Beneath the fretwork of some wild-rose tree
Within the thicket gray. The chanticleer
Sent drowsy calls across the slumbrous air;
In solemn silence sweet it was to hear
My own heart beat. . . . Then broad and deep and fair —
Trembling in its new birth from heaven's womb —
One crimson shaft of dawn sank thro' my room.

SEMIAHMOO SPIT

NE long, low, narrow strip of glistening sands
Flung out into the Georgian Gulf; one wide,
Blue sweep of sunlit waves on every side.
Around it reach the hills, like emerald bands,
And farther, higher, more majestic, stands
Mount Baker, chaste and white — the ocean's bride.
With noiseless feet the pearl-topped waters glide,
Pushing each other up the black tide-lands;
Here wild, sweet roses, like an amethyst cloud,
Make pink the air and scent the languorous breeze
That wantons over these far western seas;
And when the sun drops downward, flaming, proud,
This stretch of water, petaled fold on fold,
Seems one great crimson poppy, fleck'd with gold.

THE HOLY DAWN

GOD, the Dawn is coming up the East!
White as a virgin waking from a dream,
Or a chaste lily on a crystal stream;
Sweet as the June air when the rain has ceased,
Sweet as a love that has been hoped for least;
Dear as the thought of kisses that are gone,
Pure as a cloistered nun — dear God, the Dawn —
The holy Dawn — is coming up the East!
Now every vein, run full with sacred fire,
And heart, beat fast and thrill with ecstasy;
And soul, leap up in exquisite desire,
And throb with passion, every pulse of me! . . .
Peace to each man, O Christ, and each dumb beast,
The holy Dawn is coming up the East!

WHAT DOST THOU SEE, O NIGHT?

HAT dost thou see with thy clear eyes, O Night?
How many sinful ones upon this earth
Who curse the very hour that gave them birth;
How many who, with passionate lips and white,
Kneel, praying for the old dear, lost delight;
How many lonely breasts sob low and deep;
How many, sleeping, dream, and dreaming, weep —
How many, sleepless, count the slow hours' flight,
And long for the first yellow flush of dawn?
How many look through cruel prison bars
At the wide purple air and silver stars?
How many souls, since thou last watched, have gone
Into some other where — all rest and light? . . .
What dost thou see with thy clear eyes, O Night?

STORM

THE rain was blown in blinding sheets, that swept
The rattling windows and the quaking door.
Up the rock cliffs along the rugged shore
The ocean waves, like hungry wild beasts, leapt,
And fell, and leapt again, and fell, — then crept
Back, conquered, sobbing, down the tide's black floor.
The gusts of wind swelled to a strong, hoarse roar,
Or shrieked about the lonely eaves — and kept
A weird tune shrilling in the chimney's throat.
So raged the storm . . . till night wore into day,
Bringing a peaceful glow to East and West;
A wide, calm sea; a lull; a bird's glad note,
And spent winds resting. . . . So, dear God, I pray,
After life's feverish passions — rest, sweet rest!

A DREAM OF CLEOPATRA

AST night I slept beside the languorous Nile,
And saw swart Cleopatra, proud and large,
Drift slowly past me in her sumptuous barge.
Her crimson lips curved in a wanton smile,
Half-closed, her eyes flamed tenderness, the while
She dreamed of Antony. Her round, bare arms
Were clasped with jewels and Egyptian charms;
And her dark maids — the slow hours to beguile —
Perfumed her brow, and wove her glorious hair
In serpent coils. Pink lotus blossoms slept
On her warm breast; unevenly her breath
Came, fragrant, from her parted lips, — and ne'er
Throbbed throat so sweet. . . . *And all unnoticed crept*
Beside her, waiting, the dark reptile Death.

AFTER DEATH

IS this the couch where she lay yesternight
With awed, majestic face and fleeting breath
And great sweet eyes that would not shrink from Death?
Is this the pillow, soft with down and white,
On which her dear cheek lay, turned from the light,
While all about her, bright and golden-fair,
Sank the rich tangles of her silken hair?
Ah, God — if but for one brief time I might
Again press trembling lips upon her cheek . . .
Her slim white throat . . . her whiter brow . . .
her hair . . .
Her tender eyes wherein the love-light shone!
But once — but once — to hear those sweet lips speak!
I should be glad that she is free from care —
But oh, this first and awful night alone!

"BEING SO BEREFT"

WHAT shall I do — now being so bereft
I may no longer look on any day
And "He will come this evening"
fondly say?
How shall I, having now no pleasure left —
Of all the pleasures that of old were mine,
How shall I gather up the hours and lay
Them, each on each, all patiently away —
And have the strength to plain not nor repine?
How shall I nightly — by what artifice —
Win the sweet Lady of Poppies for my guest?
With what long pleadings buy the brief, brief bliss
Of holding her, reluctant, to my breast?
With what seductions may I lure her kiss —
Her blessed kiss of respite and of rest?

IN A VALLEY OF PEACE

THIS long, green valley sloping to the sun,
With dimpling, silver waters loitering through;
The sky that bends above me, mild and blue;
The wide, still wheat-fields, yellowing one by one,
And all the peaceful sounds when day is done —
I cannot bear their calm monotony!
Great God! I want the thunder of the sea!
I want to feel the wild red lightnings run
Around, about me; hear the bellowing surf,
And breathe the tempest's sibilant, sobbing breath;
To front the elements, defying death,
And fling myself prone on the spray-beat turf,
And hear the strong waves trampling wind and rain,
Like herds of beasts upon the mighty plain.

THE STATUE

THAT I might chisel a statue, line on line,
Out of a marble's chaste severities!
Angular, harsh; no softened curves to please;
Set tears within the eyes to make them shine,
And furrows on the brow, deep, stern, yet fine;
Gaunt, awkward, tall; no courtier of ease;
The trousers bulging at the bony knees;
Long nose, large mouth. . . . But ah, the light divine
Of Truth, — the light that set a people free! —
Burning upon it in a steady flame,
As sunset fires a white peak on the sky. . . .
Ah, God! To leave it nameless and yet see
Men looking weep and bow themselves and cry —
"Enough, enough! We know thy statue's name!"

FEBRUARY NIGHT

ELOW, the sea lies blue and cold as steel,
And smooth as satin stretched from shore to shore,
Save where a shimmering fish leaps; or an oar
Reeking with crimson rises; or the keel
Of some ship lets a rough path backward reel;
The sun — a flaming thing — sinks low and lower
And beats upon the West's unclosing door;
The shadows downward creep and reach to feel,
With long black fingers, if the day be dead;
Above, the sky glows like a pearl alight
With a rose-diamond's shifting gold and red;
And o'er the eastern mountains, soft and white,
The moon steps, trembling, from her silver bed —
A virgin bride — to meet the lips of night.

NIGHT

NIGHT — O cool and grateful summer Night!
After the fierce heat of the afternoon,
After the burning hours of languorous June,
After the sun draws seaward, brazen, bright —
How welcome is thy coming, Night, sweet Night!
Low in the blue, blue East vibrates the moon,
Mellow and large; across the shimmering dune,
The wind swells in and shakes the wheat-fields, white
With early moonbeams; the faint ripples pass
Lightly above the silver-bladed grass
Whence all the bees have taken drowsy flight. . . .
Thou soothest passionate pain from many a breast
And grantest hours of unremembering rest
To tortured hearts — thou dear, God-given Night!

EBB–TIDE

ONE the old rapture and the old delight;
Gone the still ecstasy that thrilled like fire
Along my veins, heart-lit with chaste desire;
Gone even the dream that thro' the longest night
Shone like a beacon's soft, recurrent light;
Lip-touch and hand-clasp; dear and broken speech,
Heart-question and heart-answer, each on each —
All the old rapture, all the old delight!

Gone all life's music — yea, forevermore!
Yet strong to bear I bow myself and hear
Its echoes borne up bitter years to me. . . .
As some sea-lover on a barren shore
Hears far across the waste of tide-lands drear
The lingering recession of the sea.

IN ABSENCE

EART of my heart! Time was when moments went
As petals cast upon a rushing stream,
So swift, so sweet, I could but catch their gleam
Ere gone were all their beauty and their scent —
With the slow-ebbing sea of ages blent.
Then thou wert with me! Now, alas, they seem
Long as the long-drawn torment of a dream —
Long as the endless way to sweet Content.

Yon sea that murmurs — is it blue or gray?
Yon moon that rises — is it dull or bright?
How shall I live to meet another day,
How, having met it, live on to the night —
When all my soul aches that thou art away,
And all my being for love's lost delight?

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